

THE WEEK'S PLAYS



MISS MITZI, ERSTWHILE MIZZI HAJOS

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

THE moving picture will evidently soon pass out of the realm of art. It indeed it ever belonged there. Recent developments in this new form of amusement seem to show that it will be the courts which in the future will have to deal with many of these corporations in a way which will be much more important than any mere judgment of the power of the film to entertain or thrill or instruct. The interest of the public in the moving picture companies as a means of investment has not escaped the observation of the entrepreneurs and they are just now in the heyday of their prosperity. How long it will last remains of course to be seen. The profits of the pictures in other countries has practically come to an end, so much diminished is the demand for them abroad. More than one company which habitually received as much as \$200 a day for one of its pictures is now quite satisfied to get ten a day.

This is of course not the sort of thing to make these mushroom companies any more substantial. The extent to which the pictures have supplanted the so-called travelling companies has not served to make up for the loss of the European patronage. It is chiefly the question of economy which endears the picture play to the heart of the local manager. Advertising is infinitely less expensive than it is in the case of a play, and the audiences in other cities are growing to possess confidence that they will receive the worth of their money, so far as the original qualities of the film are involved.

Dwellers in other cities have so long been deceived by inferior substitutes for the actors, by soiled or cheap costumes and scenery and various departures from the metropolitan original that they are shy of plays that are brought to them. But they know that the picture, whatever else it may be, will have the original advantages in every way.

Nothing irritates the present generation of commentators on the current plays so much as the exhibition of any but the most commonplace acting. Any display of emotion or exaltation or imagination is immediately described as "artificial," "exaggeration," or "artificiality." Luckily for the unfortunate actors who are to be judged by such criteria, there are few occasions on which they are compelled to stand or fall by such a standard. There are few performances of Shakespeare nowadays, and if contemporaneous judgment altogether ignorant of the style in which these plays are acted sets all the actors down as bombastic and old-fashioned and rhetorical little harm is done. It would be interesting, on the other hand, to know how the plays of Shakespeare could otherwise be played.

No better definition of the manner of acting these old pieces in the way that was necessary for them could be found than the following words by J. Randon Trowie in his reminiscences of the stage.

their references to the artificiality and unreality of the style of the old time actors. Of course it was artificial and unreal, but only in the sense that all the great masterpieces of imaginative fiction are unreal. It was a style deliberately cultivated and developed through some centuries of experience to harmonize with and give full effect to incidents, thoughts, aspirations and emotions outside the experience of common humanity. It did not perhaps always achieve its full purpose, but it came infinitely nearer to the realization of the fanciful than the ignoble and slovenly utterance and unregulated, spasmodic and inexpressive gesture of the untaught and self-acting player ever can. It involved a laborious study of artistic principles, and it was abandoned chiefly because it was laborious. As the demand for actors increased with the multiplication of speculative theatres and modern social plays the opportunities of teaching them grew less and less.

What a mere amateur E. H. Sothern is in the matter of farewell tours! Here he is playing his new pieces over the country to the great delight of his admirers. Whether it be in Boston or Philadelphia, the audiences fill the theatres and Mr. Sothern has none of the cause to complain which embittered his engagement in New York. He had large audiences during all his stay at the Booth Theatre, but they did not satisfy him, although most actors would have been very well satisfied.

Now with large audiences to welcome him everywhere, he has deliberately signed a contract with a moving picture company and wants to go to England as soon as his work is over. Foolish, foolish Mr. Sothern! He might readily farewell all over the country, taking about three years in the process. If Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who knows us so slightly in comparison, took as long there is no reason why Mr. Sothern, who has dwelt among us all his life, should not take at least as long a time. If he wants a native model there is no reason in the world why he should not confer with William Gillette, who will tell him how it is done. Mr. Gillette began it five years ago or more and is still on the job. He ought to have said a good farewell once he has finished.

Francis Bendsten has had two hits in New York in new plays during the present season, as the German professor in "Mrs. Bolloy's Daughters," and as Dickie Wilkes in "The Fear Market." Mr. Bendsten is Danish by birth, having been brought to this country when a child. In Chicago he was trained for the stage by Hart Conway at the Chicago Musical College. He spent three years with him, after which Mr. Mantell engaged him for his company. He made his debut at Louis XIII. in "Hedra." Among other parts he played Laurence, Gabba, First Gravedigger, Rodrigo in "Othello," and the Dauphin in "Louis XI." After leaving Mr. Mantell Mr. Bendsten was engaged by Mr. Faverham to create Soupe in Edward Childs Carpenter's "The Barber of

LEONORE ULRICH IN
"YOSEMITE"

New Orleans." From that engagement he joined Mr. Sothern and Miss Marlowe, playing *Touchstone* to Miss Marlowe's *Rosalind*, *Oscar* in "Hamlet," *Feate* in "Twelfth Night" and *Arregon* in "The Merchant." Then he went into musical comedy, appearing as the Japanese spy in "The Girl at the Gate" at the La Salle in Chicago. Last season he acted a Frenchman with Lydia Lopokova in "Just Herself" and the *Dion Titheredge* part in "Life" during the run of that piece at the Chicago Auditorium. Mr. Bendsten has also played *Ibsen* in Danish and *Moliere* in French, *Oswald* in "Ghosts" and *Argon* in "Le Malade Imaginaire."

So James M. Barrie is going to write another play for Maude Adams; or rather, having already written it, that charming actress finds it suited to her needs and will appear in it next autumn. It is said to be "whimsical" in the manner of the Scotch dramatist. It is to be hoped that its whimsicality is of an earlier brand than Sir James has been indulging in lately. Such whimsicality as pushing men out of railroad cars and then being tried for murder is not nearly so satisfactory as some of the humor in "The Little Minister," "Quality Street" and "What Every Woman Knows." So unsatisfactory has it proved indeed that London would have none of the play called "The Legend of Leonora." It proved in all probability a severe

THE PLAYS THAT LAST.

The plays that continue in New York are "The Fear Market," at the Comedy Theatre, "The Little Minister" at the Empire Theatre, "The Boomerang" at the Belasco Theatre, "Common Clay" at the Republic Theatre, "The Pride of Race" at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, "Hit the Trail Holiday" at the Harris Theatre, "Just a Woman" at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre, "The Cinderella Man" at the Hudson Theatre, "The Greatest Nation" at the Booth Theatre, "Major Barbara" and "Treasure Island" at the Punch and Judy Theatre, "Macbeth" at the Criterion Theatre, "The Melody of Youth" at the Fulton Theatre, "The Great Lover" at the Longacre Theatre, "Pay Day" at the Cort Theatre, "Erstwhile Susan" at the Gaiety Theatre, "Fair and Warner" at the Eltinge Theatre, "Abe and Mawruss" at the Lyric Theatre, "Margaret Schiller" at the New Amsterdam Theatre, "The Unchastened Woman" at the Thirty-third Street Theatre, and the Washington Square Playhouse at the Bandbox Theatre. The musical plays are "Very Good Eddie" at the Princess Theatre, "Alone at Last" at the Shubert Theatre, "Pom Pom" at the Cohan Theatre, "The Blue Paradise" at the Casino Theatre, "Svill" at the Liberty Theatre, "The Cohan Revue 1916," at the Astor Theatre, "Robinson Crusoe, Jr.," at the Winter Garden, "Stop! Look! Listen!" at the Globe Theatre, and "Katinka" at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre. The Hippodrome is open with Sousa's Band, "Hip Hip Hooryay" and "Flirting at St. Moritz," a big spectacular offering.



OLIVE WYNDHAM IN
"THE GREATEST NATION"

test of Miss Adams' popularity in this country. She is of course the most admired of all American actresses. But as the mother of six children who has pushed out of the door of her compartment a man who would keep the window open and thus endangered the health of her child, he had a severe task to please her public. The first act, which was written as a one act drama, showed Miss Adams at her irresistible best. After Sir James had, however, added the scene from "Trial by Jury" to make his other acts and wound up with an inconsequential final episode the famed Barrie "whimsicality" had been submitted to a severe test.

It is to be hoped therefore for the sake of the public, for the actress and the author that the Barrie brand of "whimsicality" will resemble the earlier vintage.

Do the prima donnas who depart from opera—grand opera they always call it—act after all with wisdom? How about Fritz Schaff with her bankruptcy and her vaudeville and the rest of the circumstances that mark the easy artistic descent? Would she not after all have been more successful from every point of view had she remained in the genre in which her career was begun? Ernestine Schumann-Heink was wise enough to depart from opera after a year. She was one of the few who benefited in all by the experience. She acquired in that way admirers who might otherwise never have heard of her and yet continued loyal.

Marguerite Sylva sang in "Gipsy Love" for one year, accumulated as much as three seasons in opera abroad would have required and went back to Europe. Certainly Emma Trentini has not been in receipt of any considerable profits during recent months. Her case was similar to Miss Schaff's in that she could only sing certain roles in opera—indeed her repertoire was even more limited. But it is announced that Miss Trentini will come back here after her labors in nursing the soldiers of the Italian army are at an end. It was always supposed that she devoted her time in Italy to the conduct of a large cheese business which she controls in Mantua. This wise investment is said to be the source in normal times of a considerable income to her. But she is coming back to sing in opera. This will doubtless be a

source of delight to her admirers. So far as we are concerned, however, we could do with a piece of cheese.

There is one advantage possessed today by all the musical plays over dramas, comedy, tragedy, historical, pastoral, &c. They are not compelled to come into opposition with the "movies." They have one ineradicable feature which will forever keep them out of rivalry with the so-called "silent theatre." They have music. Does that account for the continued success of the play with music? Be they never so stupid, they are certain to attract audiences for a month or two.

Their librettos cannot be too banal, their music too commonplace, their humor too elementary to drive the public away for the first two months. Thus they are assured of a run for a certain length of time, however lame they may be. No mere dramatic performance of any kind can thus hope to exist for a certain period quite independent of its merits. Of course it is not possible to say anything about the quality of "The Masked Model," which so completely failed of appreciation in Washington and Baltimore that its career is, temporarily at all events, at an end. But it is dollars to doughnuts that it would have lasted for a month or two prosperously at a New York theatre. Such is the present vogue of opera and such is the power of the voice—even when it is lifted in very conventional song—superior to anything that the dead machine can accomplish. When the cut rate ticket is taken into consideration the longevity of the moderately successful musical play may be indefinitely prolonged.

Albert Johnson, who is back at the Winter Garden, is still "an amooosin' little cuss." He sings his songs with the old effectiveness and seems the incarnation of good nature and modesty. Nothing ever disturbs his amiability nor does self-consciousness ever interfere with the delight he causes his admirers. His boyish flounce still marks a contrast to his associates in the play. He is the most youthful looking of all the funny men.

He is wisely in blackface. Probably he will stick to his determination never to attempt any other kind of comedy. It is a singular fact that since Mr. Johnson came to the Winter Garden he has not acquired a single

new trick. He has made no progress; to judge by the fun he imparts to his present performance his artistic method was complete before he left vaudeville. He is still irresistibly entertaining, however, even if he does not, like his colleague, Fred Stone, come back every second year with something novel to delight and astonish his public.

HILLIARD AND MATILDA HERON.

Interesting Memories of the Actor of the Great Camille.

"One of the out of town papers has done me the honor of asserting that I was the greatest Armand Duval of my day and generation," remarked Robert Hilliard between his acts of "The Pride of Race" at the Maxine Elliott the other night. "Now heaven forbid that I should ever voluntarily and deliberately shatter a fine press notice, but then there is just enough of the 'honest Injun' in me to prevent such an assertion going down to tradition unchallenged. As a matter of fact I have never played in a perform-

here. I want to see you. Sit in the light." "I obeyed her, and as soon as the light fell on my face her whole expression and manner changed. She might have been my mother looking at me, from the tenderness which came into her eyes. She came across the room and almost with petulance laid her hand upon my hair. Tugging her hand through it she exclaimed: 'Oh! Why—why haven't you got curly hair? I could have loved you if you had.'"

"I looked up at her entirely non-plussed, and being proud of my sleek locks I asked her, just a little aggrieved, what was the matter with them. 'My dear boy,' she said, and there was a sob in her voice, 'has no one ever told you that you look like him?'" "Him? Who?" I blurted out. "Why, the greatest actor this country has ever known. Except that your hair is straight and his was curly you are the living image of Wilkes Booth. 'I loved Wilkes Booth,' she went on, as her eyes filled with tears. 'When they showed me my picture in a locket placed over his heart, and—' she put her hand into her bodice and drawing out a locket showed me the handsome face of President Lincoln's murderer."

"If it wasn't for the hair," she said as she gazed lovingly at the picture.

THE PLAYS OF THE WEEK.

SUNDAY—The Gaiety Theatre—The Stage Society will give a rehearsal of August Strindberg's "Easter." Public performance on Saturday afternoon.

MONDAY—The Cohan Theatre—"Princess Pom Pom" with Mizzi Hajos in the leading role.

The Booth Theatre—"The Greatest Nation," by Marion Creighton, with William Elliott in the leading role.

The Comedy Theatre—"The Fear Market" will be brought here from the Booth Theatre.

TUESDAY—The Lyceum Theatre—"The Heart of Weonta," by George Scarborough.

WEDNESDAY—The Park Theatre—"The Road to Mandalay," a comic opera by Oreste Vassella, W. H. Post and William McKenna, will be played here.



IRENE FENWICK IN
"PAY DAY"

ance of 'Camille' in my life. But the thing which I tell you now is history.

"Although I never played Armand Duval, the greatest of all American Camilles and the woman who created it died in my arms. The actress I speak of was Matilda Heron. Away back in 1867, while I was still a small boy in knickerbockers, she made a translation of Dumas's play and appeared in it. Her success in this role was so enormous that at the moment I can think of no star in these latter days to compare with her case.

"The fame of her performance glowed like an ember for more than fifteen years when I in my early twenties, as fresh a nut as Brooklyn ever produced, got the stage fever and

you might have been his son—or at least his younger brother."

"Well, that was the beginning of our friendship. My next vivid recollection of her was the night of our performance. I shall never forget that as long as I live. I played *Flut-*

NEW PLAYS OF THE WEEK

Mizzi Hajos, who is one of the most beautiful of the feminine comedians on the stage, is returning to New York to-morrow night for the first time since she was seen here in her delightful performance of the heroine of "Sari." Tom MacNaughton will be associated with Miss Hajos in the leading role of "Pom Pom," which is the title of the new work. Hugo Felix, who has put other successful works to his credit, is the composer of the new work, while Anne Caldwell, the successful woman playwright, is the author of the libretto. The heroine has the opportunity to appear in turn as a prima donna, a pickpocket, a jailbird and ultimately as a hostage. Among Miss Hajos's associates will be Carl Gustav, Tom Walsh, William Kelly, Edith Day and others. An orchestra of thirty-two will be conducted by Max Bendix.

"The Greatest Nation," by Marion Creighton and William Elliott, will be acted at the Booth Theatre on Monday, with William Elliott in the leading role. Concerning the play the following information has been garnered. The story has to do with the diplomatic relations of the kingdoms of Adlon and Thor, between which there has long existed a traditional jealousy. The young Prince of Donau, Crown Prince of Thor, is mentally progressive and a man of considerable engineering ability. In the last year of his father's reign he superintends great works, which eventually give rise to the suspicion on the part of Adlon that he is planning some sort of strategic aggression against the interests of Adlon. At the very moment when these suspicions come to the ears of the young Prince, his father, the King of Thor, is assassinated while travelling near the frontier of Adlon. The excited populace immediately point the finger of suspicion at Adlon. This develops the dramatic climax, which is said to be of unusual power and originality.

The scenic production is by Joseph Urban. Mr. Elliott's role is that of the Crown Prince of Thor and the character of the King of Adlon is played by Hal Ford. The leading female roles are played by Olive Wyndham and Mrs. Vessella. In addition the cast contains the names of Rowland Buckstone, Cordelia Macdonald, Sydney Mathers, Edward

Vaudeville and Burlesque.

PALACE THEATRE—Irene Bordoni and Melville Ellis will be the particular attraction this week in a series of piano-logues. Others include Mrs. Thomas Whiffen in "The Golden Night" by Edgar Allan Woolf, "The River of Souls" by John R. Golden, Ruth Royce, Martine Johnstone, Palfrey, Hall and Brown and the Gomez Trio of Spanish Dancers.

COLONIAL THEATRE—Albert Whalen, an English monologist and comic singer, will be at the head of the programme. Others will be Clare Morton, Paul Morton and Naomi Glass, Charles Evans and company, Santley and Norton, Howard, Kibbel and Herbert, Bernard and Scarth, Myrl and Delmar and Yow Hwa and Moey Yuen, Chinese singers in American songs.

ALHAMBRA THEATRE—Belle Baker, Odiva, George Sidney, Savoy and Brennan in "On the Rialto," Lucy Gillette, Corcoran and Dingle, "The International Girl"; Lew and Mollie Hunting and Col. Marc Diamond and Mme. Grant and others make up this week's programme.

COLUMBIA THEATRE—"The Gypsy Maids" which is the latest addition to the list of advanced burlesque organizations, will present a new two act burlesque called "On the Trail" at the Columbia Theatre this week. The principal characters are played by Bill J. Kennedy and Jack Miller. There will also be a large chorus of girls.

YORKVILLE THEATRE—"The Follies of Pleasure," a combination of burlesque and vaudeville in which there will be featured an up to date revue of current stage successes, comes to the Yorkville Theatre this week with a strong cast of comedians.

termore. Well, you know how amateurs are. I hadn't a trace of stage fright. I just pruned on and played my first scene admirably. Came off fully convinced that I was the real thing, and evidently I was, for the moment, for Miss Heron came to me in the wings and exclaimed: 'My dear boy, you were superb!'

"That was my finish. A moment later I had to go on again to play a very important scene with Miss Heron.

"Whether it was the compliment she had paid me or the awe with which the great actress inspired me I don't know; anyhow, something had hoodooed me. I couldn't remember a line, and as for cues, every one of them left me. The scene ended in a fiasco brought about entirely by me. When I staggered off the stage Miss Heron was close upon my trail. 'You little boaster!' she cried, and with her open hand she smote me the most awful box on the ear which I have received in the course of a long and more or less pugilistic existence.

"Later of course we made up and became fast friends again. Then one night her maid came hunting for me. She said her mistress was dying. I found her in bed shivering with cold. 'Why don't you give her some brandy?' I cried. 'The maid drew me aside and said, 'Mr. Hilliard, we haven't got a nickel left to our name.' After I had got the brandy for her she revived, and while we were waiting for the doctor she insisted on getting out of bed and walking up and down like a caged tiger. In a few minutes she became delirious and insisted on getting into bed with her head toward the bottom. It was in trying to lift her and place her in a right position that she suddenly passed out."

"Her dying words were those which she had written for *Camille* which at the end of her play—"Poor *Camille* is so tired—so weary!"

Wade, J. Hooker Wright, Thomas P. Gunn, C. L. Felter, Roland Rushton, Henry Dugan, Harry Rose and Gordon Burly.

David Belasco and the Charles Frohman Company will produce at the Lyceum Theatre on Tuesday "The Heart of Weonta," by George Scarborough. The play has its scenes laid in the West and army officers as well as Indians figure in the persons of the drama. The principal roles will be acted by Leonore Ulrich, William Courtleigh, Lowell Sherman and others. It is to David Belasco that the production of the play is attributable.

"The Road to Mandalay," an operetta, by Oreste Vassella, W. H. Post and William McKenna, will be sung at the Park Theatre on Wednesday. Signor Vassella is known as the director of the band in Atlantic City. Sixty voices will sing the melodies, which will be on Wednesday under the direction of the composer, although on succeeding evenings Signor Vassella will conduct the players. In the cast are Herbert Cortell, Frank Pollock, Leola Lucey, Marie Hogan, Lawrence Grant, Edward Morris and others. Vassella came to America from the little town of Alfio, near Naples, having studied music in the University of Naples and served his term in the Italian army as a bandman. He lost heart after months of vain search for work and endeavor to learn the speech and the ways of America, and was about to take passage for Italy when he found a name to come to the Royal Italian Band and toured two hundred American cities with that organization. Then came a tentative opening to play in the band at the Iron Pier, Atlantic City, and a happy chance that disclosed his genius for conducting and thorough musicianship. For a year he led the band under another name, but the second season it became "Vassella's Band," and Vassella is known from one end of the country to another, by Atlantic City's vast amateur public, as the Sousa of the Iron Pier. Fourteen years conducting there, he has written a number of popularities, chiefly lyrics and dance music, but "The Road to Mandalay" is his first opera. Signor de Novellis, sponsor for a host of the light opera successes of recent seasons, including "The Chocolate Soldier" and a name to come to the operatic production, is musical director and will conduct at all performances except the first night.